

Volunteer Organization Profile: HandsOn Jacksonville, Jacksonville, FL

Volunteering in America 2011

When your mission is to serve one of the biggest, most expansive cities in the United States, you need a lot of helping hands. Thanks in part to a partnership with Disney, HandsOn Jacksonville had more than 10,000 sets of hands come through its doors in just the first three months of 2010. Those families and individuals made a huge contribution by collecting 10 tons of food for Second Harvest, creating disaster preparedness kits, and donating books and art supplies.

In addition to putting volunteers to work on a variety of projects, HandsOn Jacksonville also cultivates leaders for volunteerism through the Blueprint for Leadership program. The program ensures that talented and dynamic people continue to be involved with nonprofit organizations and community agencies as volunteers and as leaders. At the end of the program, graduates participate either in a one-year internship with a local nonprofit's board of directors or as a HandsOn Jacksonville High Impact Project Leader.



Karen Millard graduated from Blueprint for Leadership in 2011 and is also a professor at Florida Coastal School of Law. As the director of pro bono services at the law school, Karen is no stranger to serving the community, but ended up learning some valuable lessons of her own through her experience.

For their class project, Karen and her classmates helped to beautify the Family Nurturing Center. The nonprofit center provides exchange and visitation services in a safe, nurturing environment for children who are separated from their parents. The group cleaned the grounds, installed benches and tables outside, painted and renovated rooms, and provided new bicycles, books, and toys to help 350 children feel more welcome. Now Karen is serving on the board of the Family Nurturing Center and gets to see the children who are going through a rough time in their lives cruise by smoothly on their bikes.

“Jacksonville’s commitment to service doesn’t surprise me given the contribution my students make and the work that HandsOn Jacksonville does every day,” said Karen Millard. “My students tell me that volunteering is so rewarding because they get to help others, but are surprised to find that they also do a lot to help themselves. I was surprised to see my work benefit so many young children and families at the Family Nurturing Center and make a tangible difference in individual lives.”

HandsOn Jacksonville serves as the on-ramp to volunteering on Florida's First Coast and mobilized 16,852 volunteers for 1,131 service projects in 2010. The organization started in the 1970's as Volunteer Jacksonville and re-branded as an affiliate of the national HandsOn Network in 2008. While it has only been a part of the HandsOn Network for a few years, HandsOn Jacksonville has a long history of bettering their community. In addition to mobilizing volunteers, in 2010, their signature program, A Visit From St. Nicholas, provided 6,500 underprivileged elementary school kids with backpacks stuffed with 28,000 toys and 28,000 books; and through The Hope Fund, a collaborative effort of HandsOn Jacksonville, *The Florida Times-Union* and the University of North Florida, supported 37 nonprofit agencies with \$111,848 in cash donations for their clients in need.

"The result of our volunteers' efforts has literally gone through the roof," said Dr. Judith Smith, president and CEO of HandsOn Jacksonville. "Families and individuals participating in the Disney initiative helped us collect enough food for the food bank to stack to the ceiling and build more emergency preparedness kits than we had room to store. This kicked off a phenomenal year of community good will. Additionally, our Blueprint for Leadership program placed 20-30 new, highly trained and motivated volunteers as interns on local nonprofit boards ensuring that local nonprofit leadership continues to thrive."

For more information about HandsOn Jacksonville, visit www.handsonjacksonville.org. You can also follow [@HandsOnJax](https://twitter.com/HandsOnJax) on Twitter or like [HandsOn Jacksonville](https://www.facebook.com/HandsOnJacksonville) on Facebook.

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